Women of Color Faculty at the University of Michigan: Recruitment, Retention, and Campus Climate

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INTRODUCTION

Identifying the Problem

   Over the five-year period between 2001 and 2006, women of color faculty members at the University of Michigan have had an average attrition rate of five women per year. These numbers are significant considering the fact that women of color make up 7% of the total faculty membership. As we look further up the academic hierarchy, these numbers become even more troubling, since women of color account for a mere 3% of full professors.[1] Numbers, however, are only a small piece of the larger picture. This study represents an important next step in exploring the nature and extent of the issues most salient to women of color faculty and developing ways to creatively confront the deeply embedded challenges that institutionalized racism and sexism pose. Essentially, this study seeks to uncover not only how to recruit and retain women of color faculty members but also how to improve the quality of their academic and social lives, so that they may move beyond simply surviving the University of Michigan academy to locating spaces where they may thrive.

   In working with the Women of Color in the Academy Project (WOCAP) for the past thirteen years, the Center for the Education of Women has witnessed first hand the individual and collective stories of women of color as they navigate, struggle within, make compromises and ultimately attempt to positively transform the social and cultural environment of the University of Michigan. Women of color faculty at all ranks have shared their frustration with impossible workloads,[2] carrying the unequal burden of mentoring students that are not officially assigned to them, and having to defend their scholarship to skeptical peers. They also talk about the lack of social and professional support networks and, more recently, a discomfort and alienation in a post-Proposal 2 climate that is becoming increasingly hostile to women and racial minorities. In 1999, WOCAP produced a video entitled *Through My Lens* to highlight experiences of women of color faculty members across all ranks and disciplines at the University. Not much has

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[1] See the attached appendix for the complete breakdown of the faculty membership by rank, gender and ethnicity. These data represent the 2007-08 academic year.

[2] One associate professor in the social sciences revealed that she currently sits on over forty dissertation committees. She is in high demand in a large department where she is only one of three women of color and additionally where her innovative scholarship is stretching the boundaries of traditional work in her field.

changed since the making of this documentary. Women of color faculty are still contributing to the University of Michigan's reputation for excellence with their cutting edge scholarship, innovative pedagogy, and commitment to serving the campus and broader community through extensive mentoring and service activities. On the other hand, women of color are still engaged in the daily battle to receive the respect, support and inclusion they have earned and which is afforded their non-minority colleagues.

Although the central goal of this report is to contribute to institutional transformation, which often means identifying and challenging negative aspects within the academic structure, the women of color faculty interviewees also pay attention to the things that are working. Therefore, this document also presents the current initiatives, actions, and structures that women of color see making a positive difference for all faculty members. This study represents an important next step in exploring the nature and extent of the issues most salient to women of color faculty and developing ways to creatively confront the deeply embedded challenges that institutionalized racism and sexism pose.

Many of the concerns and challenges identified by the women of color faculty in this study mirror those of junior faculty in general. Research on early career faculty, particularly work on junior women faculty (Waltman and Hollenshead, 2007), has shown that the unclear and coded expectations surrounding tenure and promotion; lack of support in creating balance in family life and work responsibilities; and challenges associated with becoming fully socialized within their departments are issues that all junior faculty appear to have significant difficulty navigating.

This does not mean, however, that these challenges have the same impact on women of color as they do the majority population of junior faculty. A combination of lack of seniority and untenured status renders junior faculty relatively powerless within their departments. In addition to contending with tenure-based hierarchies, women of color must also, however, battle racism and sexism. These interlocking forms of discrimination make the experiences of women of color uniquely oppressive, calling for radical responses on the individual, departmental and institutional levels. The fact that no space is typically allotted for non-normative voices within the traditional structure of

higher education systems means that the visibility and legitimization of women of color's perspectives is critical to implementing sustainable institutional change.

Relevant Research Findings

There is a large and growing body of literature in higher education that speaks to the status of women and minority faculty (Aguirre, 2000; Aguirre et. al, 1993; Antonio, 2002; Baez, 2000; Thompson and Louque, 2005). These various studies, based on research at large public institutions and as well at smaller private colleges, indicate that overall, when compared with their majority peers, minority and women faculty are less satisfied within their institutions and feel they neither "fit" nor are welcomed within their departments.[3] Many of these researchers additionally note that even though affirmative action initiatives have increased the numbers of undergraduate students entering higher education, there has been only marginal progress made in the faculty ranks. The literature on women of color in the academy points to much less favorable outcomes for female faculty who must contend with multiple marginalities (Sotello and Turner, 2002). For women of color, the climate on campus is especially influential in that, "the tone of a campus foreshadows what a minority faculty day-to-day's life will be. And given the persistence of sexism on so many campuses, minority women are doubly affected *(*Merget, 1994: 183*)."* If we consider the well documented cases of increased hostility towards minorities during times of institutional change, along with the data that assert minority faculty are much less satisfied than non-minority faculty, and women are much less satisfied than men, we must ask how this bodes for women of color at the University of Michigan in this current historical moment as questions of diversity, inclusion and equity frame our awkward dialogues on race and gender in the academy.

Through the narratives of women of color faculty at the University of Michigan, this study queries the assertion made by Aguirre, et al. (1993) that the affirmative action strategies of the late 1960s served primarily to enhance universities' image and reputation rather than making discernable change in the academic environment for minorities. The twenty-eight women of color faculty voices represented herein speak to the fact that "just

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[3] For a helpful overview of the history of and trends within research interests in minorities and women in higher education see, Alberto Aguirre, Jr., "Women and Minority Faculty in the Academic Workplace: Recruitment, Retention and Academic Culture," *ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Reports* v. 27 (no. 6, 2000): pp. 1-62.

having a policy on the books doesn't necessarily change the culture and climate on campus. People experience those policies and practices quite differently."[4] The decision-makers at the University of Michigan must listen carefully to the insight offered through these women's stories if the institution is to move from gestures towards diversity to enduring structural change.

Scholarship by women working across the disciplines of higher education, black feminist theory and anthropology emphasizes a critical point readily apparent in the narratives and analysis to follow: These women are not passive victims. In keeping with the ideological framework of resiliency and resistance utilized by Gloria D. Thomas and Carol Hollenshead (2001), Patricia Hill Collins (2000), Caroline Sotello, Viernes Turner (2002), and Chandra Talpade Mohanty (2006), I highlight the strategies and critical insights offered through individual accounts that form a powerful collective imperative for action.[5] It is these imperatives that shape the recommendations that appear at the end of this summary. The female faculty informants describe these strategies as "coping mechanisms," "ways to stay sane," "maintaining a sense of self" and "survival."

An additional goal of this summary paper is to identify how these individualized survival tactics can be translated into tools for dismantling the structures of inequity and disempowerment that necessitate their use in the first place. We need to ask how the university as an institution can begin to alleviate the burden of women of color faculty by working to incorporate their strategies for creating spaces of equity and inclusion, while simultaneously working towards the larger goal of making the university a place where the need for these strategies eventually becomes obsolete. With the passage of the anti-affirmative action initiative, Proposal 2, interrogation of the actual day-to-day practices,

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[4] Statement made by Harvard University researcher, Cathy A. Trower, who directed the survey on junior faculty members and the university policies that help them succeed in Lauren Smith, "Junior Faculty Members Care About University Policies to Help Them Succeed, but Question Their Effectiveness," *Chronicle of Higher Education* August 2, 2007.

[5] Turner and Hollenshead term this "resisting from the margins." Throughout history the marginal positions of women and minority have proven to be deceptively effective positions from which change can emerge and begin to affect transformation at the center or, in other words, those aspects that through the subjugation of minority populations, have become constructed as our "norms," "standards" and "traditions."

policies, encounters, and interactions in the once seemingly protected liberal bastion[6] of the University is even more critical.

Strengths of Qualitative Research

Quantitative data on the recruitment and retention rates for women of color faculty at the University of Michigan alert us to and help us identify the problem. However, in order to understand how and why the rates are what they are, we need access to the particularities of women of color's lived experiences. As Miles and Huberman (1984) note, qualitative research allows for the "possibility for understanding latent, underlying, or non-obvious issues." Within each faculty member's story and across stories, a deeper complexity is revealed that helps illuminate elusive concepts such as climate, marginalization, exclusiveness and collegiality. This is vitally important given the often subtle and insidious nature of discrimination, and the difficulty in defining how it actually operates and influences individual and collective lives. Peering through the lens of these women's narratives, we have no choice but to acknowledge and validate the impact and consequences of deeply embedded structural inequalities. The words of the women of color in this study provide clues as to where constructive intervention can take place and, additionally, help predict the strategies that may be most effective.

Bringing the perspectives of women of color faculty to the forefront validates and honors their critical analysis as a blueprint for tackling institutional change. It is, however, the perspectives of women of color that are often made invisible and delegitimized through claims that their stories are just that—personal, clouded by emotion, and disconnected from larger social realities. This study challenges this notion while reclaiming the strategy of bearing witness to and asserting the authority of underrepresented voices. Below, Dwight McBride, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Professor of African American and Women's Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago, defines what this study is both working against and towards:

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[6] Liberal bastion was a term used by several of the interviewees to define their perceptions of the University during the recruitment process.

We have rhetorically seized their ability to bear authoritative witness to, or even to be in the best position to know, what it is that happens to them in the world. And he who effectively controls the form of epistemology (how we come to know what it is we know) ultimately goes far toward controlling what it is we can know. It is not altogether unlike the old adage that says: Until the lions have their own historians, the hunter will always be valorized.[7]

METHODOLOGY

Selection Pool

The 28 women interviewed were recruited from a pool of 72 eligible women of color that included both current and former University of Michigan faculty. These women of color were identified through the University's human resources database. Current faculty eligibility was based on their self-identification as women of color and status as third or fourth year junior faculty. These women of color faculty members spanned the range of schools, colleges and disciplines from the business and medical schools to social sciences and humanities. Assistant professors in their third or fourth year were recruited because we were interested in looking at the period directly after their third year review but prior to the tenure review.

Former faculty recruits included women from the ranks of assistant professor through full professor in all fields and disciplines who left the University of Michigan within the past five years. Former faculty members were recruited whether they were at another academic institution or left academia altogether to pursue other careers and interests. The 28 participants represent 21 (out of 42) current faculty members and 7 (out of 30) former faculty members.

Of the 44 who were not interviewed for this stage of the study, 11 have agreed to be interviewed in the coming terms; 6 declined participation, one individual citing time constraints and the three others expressing an unwillingness to "rehash difficult times," "relive the past," or "go back there," now that they have moved on to institutions they define as better fits both academically and socially; the remaining 27 women have not responded to the three rounds of email requests that I have sent out.

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[7] In *Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch*. 2005. New York: New York University Press. pg. 4.

Recruitment

        I sent emails to the entire pool of eligible faculty, explaining the intention and scope of the project and requesting an hour to an hour and a half of their time for a one-on-one interview. All recruits were informed of confidentiality protocol and their rights as participants. Current faculty members had the option of conducting these interviews in person or via phone if more convenient. Former faculty interviews, with the exception of one, were all conducted over the phone and recorded with a phone voice-recording device. All of the women were able to determine whether or not they wanted their interviews audio recorded. Only one faculty member requested not to be taped. Her interview responses were captured through handwritten notes.

Protocol

        All interviews were conducted between November 2006 and June 2007. The interviews lasted between 45 minutes to one and a half hours with the average interview length being one hour. The face-to-face interviews were conducted at locations of the interviewees' choice, usually their office, an off-campus café or, in a few cases, their home. For current faculty my questions focused on the factors that brought them to the U of M (how they were recruited and what convinced them to come), their specific departmental climate and perceptions of the overall campus climate, and the competing factors that kept them at the University as Michigan as well as those that could threaten to make them leave.

        These broad, open-ended prompts allowed plenty of room for issues to come into clear focus, such as family life and work balance; the location of the University; the tenure process; mentoring; workload; respect for scholarship; teaching and student concerns; collegiality and social support; professional collaborations; and the role of the departmental chair. It was not surprising to watch the stories of these 26 diverse women unfolded in seamless narratives after simply being asked to "tell me about your time here at the University of Michigan." In many cases, the interviewee would cover the entire interview protocol with very little prompting. It was apparent that these were stories bursting at the seams, in need of the release and healing that occurs in the act of voicing and telling a silenced truth. Former faculty members were asked similar questions but with a focus on the issues and considerations surrounding their departure from the

University of Michigan. All of the participants gave their consent to future contact for follow-up interviews.

Demographics of Participants

"Women of color" is a complicated and somewhat ambiguous term that does not fully capture the totality of minority female faculty's intersecting identities and multiple positions both within and outside of the academy.[8] However, "women of color" is a term that allows non-Caucasian women to easily locate themselves as part of a diverse group of minority females. This was evidenced by the fact that all of the participants in this study expressed that they could identify with the term even if it imperfectly encapsulated their experiences. The 28 women in this study included women who self-identified as African American, Black (non-American), Latina, Asian, and Asian American. The disciplinary range of the participants included the humanities, social sciences, STEM disciplines and professional schools.[9] Despite the obvious differences in race, ethnic background, nationality and discipline, all of the women expressed the desire to share their stories in the hopes that they would have an impact on the broader University community of students and faculty, staff and administrators regardless of individual variation in color, status, gender or prescribed university role. This preliminary summary report honors the spirit and intention in which these stories, insights and recommendations were shared.

FINDINGS

When asked to reflect on their experiences at the University of Michigan, the women in this study frame their responses within the context of their departments. This makes sense, of course, considering this is where faculty members spend the majority of their time and where they are expected to develop their primary professional relationships. Perceptions of departments ranged from extremely positive and highly

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[8] The African American scholar/activist, Ella Bell, prefers the term multicultural women as a more accurate reflection of the complexity of women of color's lives in a global and relational perspective.
[9] The disciplinary backgrounds of the participants are kept broad to protect their anonymity. In addition, although more detailed information on the aspects of these women's personal lives and family compositions will be revealed as relevant in the following sections, that information is not presented in this frame so as to avoid identification of individuals through deduction.

supportive to demoralizing and abusive. Out of the 21 current faculty members, 7 women are in departments they described as very satisfactory and supportive. These departments include two from the social sciences, one from the STEM fields and three from professional schools. Two of the 21 current faculty members characterized their departments as sites that were overtly hostile to women and minorities. These two departments are both located in professional schools. The majority of women, the remaining 12, said their departments fall somewhere between these positive and negative poles.

Although I am creating this spectrum based on the overall characterizations of the interviewees, I should make clear that no department or school is all good or entirely bad. In fact, in a few cases, one department described as a nurturing and accepting place by one woman is described as hostile and inherently racist by another. It is important to make sense out of those factors that contribute to both positive and negative experiences and how every department can work to increase its supportive elements while simultaneously dismantling its destructive structural factors. In this preliminary summary, I will focus on the common ground—those salient factors in the department identified by all the women as critical to determining their overall satisfaction, regardless of whether the department itself is seen as positive, negative or neutral.

The core issues identified by the women of color faculty in this study as having the greatest impact on their quality of life at the University of Michigan fall under the two broad categories of **work** and **social well-being**. The category of work includes concerns related to research, teaching and service expectations. Under the umbrella of social well being are the challenges identified as having the most significant impact on female faculty members' feelings of overall health and satisfaction within their departments, including personal and work life balance and combating social marginalization. Underlying these emergent themes are the larger philosophical issues that get translated into the specific events and interactions that shape the lives of women of color faculty at the University of Michigan. Primary among these structural factors are superficial, lip-service commitments to diversity and the lack of an across-the-board investment in mentoring, both in terms of the relationship between senior and junior faculty and between faculty and students.

Work and Professional Development

1) Devaluation of Scholarship and Intellect

The interviewees' journeys to the University of Michigan began with a passion for their chosen disciplines and research projects. Therefore, these women of color faculty members held the minimal expectation that their work would be respected within their departments. They believed this respect should be demonstrated through: 1) the freedom to pursue their research; 2) their colleagues' acknowledgment of and desire to understand their research; 3) access to the same financial and human resources as their colleagues; 4) respect for their scholarship as more than just a way of bringing diversity to the department; 5) and inclusion in the decision-making process regarding curricula and pedagogical practices in the department. However, the experiences of many of the interviewees reveal that their research projects and scholarly contributions are either dismissed or suppressed in departmental environments where their primary benefit as scholars is seen as superficially representing diversity.

Grace, a former faculty member in the humanities, recalls what happened when, in the mid to late 1990s, her former department made a concerted effort to recruit a more ethnically and diverse faculty:

> They brought in all of these wonderful young scholars, black, Asian, you know…but mostly African Americans and then it was like there was virtually no interest in hearing what they had to say about the direction of the department and absolutely no interest in engaging their work. It was like, okay, you make us look good, we appear diverse now be quiet. And then, there was all of this incredulity when these assistant professors started to leave and go to other universities. I had to leave too; there was too much hypocrisy and no commitment to the scholarship and work we were doing.

Grace chose to leave the University of Michigan even though she had tenure and deep roots in the Ann Arbor community. The department's superficial understanding of diversity and lack of commitment to change made it easy for Grace to make the move to an equally prestigious research university with a proven track record of supporting minority and women faculty and directly addressing the challenges posed to diversity within predominantly white institutions.

Dana, a current professor in the humanities, discusses the challenges she and other minority scholars in her interdisciplinary department faced when they collaborated to develop a project based on their work in ethnic studies that included graduate students and all ranks of faculty interested in articulating new directions for the field. Although their proposed project had the potential to bring new funding sources and positive attention to the department (one that publicly prides itself on innovative and progressive research), the chair of the department refused to support the grant and subsequently accused all of the primarily junior, minority faculty involved of "betraying him." Dana states:

> I couldn't believe it. We were only trying to further and expand the work we were all ostensibly brought here to do. And there were rumors going around the majority. more senior faculty members that we were trying to stage a coup. And I'm thinking if we wanted to stage a coup, this is our department, too, so why not?

Both Grace's and Dana's statements demonstrate the frustration of working within environments where women of color scholars do not believe they are considered full participants in the intellectual work of the department. In these cases, diversity appears to matter only in the phenotypical sense. Diverse perspectives and innovative ways of approaching research and pedagogy are unwelcome and marginalized. The silencing of the voices and creative contributions of women of color works counter to the University's mission of supporting groundbreaking, socially relevant research.

Tamara, an assistant professor in one of the professional schools, discusses her experience with the conditional commitments to diversity on the part of her non-minority peers. In the narrative below, she details what happened immediately after attending a faculty "diversity discussion."

> It's clear that the white males are together and I'm sort of on the outside. I'm on the diversity committee, and, after one of those meetings, I was walking out with two of my white male colleagues, and they just sort of stepped out in front of me. We had to walk from [the office where the meeting was held] back to the school. They stepped right out in front of me, and they just had this in-depth conversation about the constitutionality of affirmative action, all the stuff that we talked about in the meeting. I'm walking two steps behind. It was just weird. It didn't even occur to them, "maybe we should walk next to her and include her in the conversation." There are other times when they're having conversations and it's clear that

you're not one of the boys. You can do the work, but you're not going to be a part of their social network.

Tamara believes that in the eyes of her male non-minority peers she represents a viewpoint or collective standpoint. In this way, it is difficult for Tamara's colleagues to look past their objectification and consider her an equal in their dialogue. In both the conversation within the formal diversity meeting and in the informal discussion afterwards, Tamara physically represents the concept of diversity. However, it is this same physical presence (difference) that prevents Tamara's peers from being able to include her in the difficult conversations about inequality and access. This type of collegial engagement and "real talk"[10] is one of diversity's primary goals and, yet, the inability to see beyond women of color's racial and gender identity both necessitates and becomes the challenge for diversity. Tamara is tolerated within the officially defined boundaries of a diversity discussion, but ignored as a true intellectual outside of this context.

Chandra, a former faculty member, explains how her colleagues' lack of respect for her work was demonstrated in their failure to attempt to understand her scholarship. This became especially clear to Chandra when she was working on a curriculum planning committee and found that the committee chose to classify her work on African Americans as "foreign." She states that,

> The people on the long term planning committee that I sat on didn't even know how to talk about my work; they classified it completely wrong. And their attitude was so dismissive. It was as if they didn't even feel the need to even pretend as if they cared enough or saw enough value in my work to understand it. Even just at the level of accurately defining it.

The University's stated commitment to and valuing of interdisciplinary and innovative level does not always trickle down to the departmental level in interactions with colleagues and chairs. Although the general atmosphere in Chandra's department at her new institution is hostile, she feels that her work is far more valued there – clearly an important distinction.

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[10] "Real talk" is currently being used in the discourse on diversity issues to define a level of conversation that puts the issues of power and inequality on the table and dispenses with language and conversational behaviors that avoid difficult questions and honest dialogue. Real talk is thought to be the post affirmative action era's response to the inefficacy of politically correct language

Gemina, a faculty member in the social sciences, discusses how the assumption of women of color's scholarly inferiority is not just a personal matter that affects self-esteem. Perceptions impact the reality of women of color faculty's ability to develop critical collaborations, network effectively and advance in their careers. In turn, excluding women of color's expertise from research projects negatively affects the potential for innovative work and the development of new theories and methodologies.

> One thing I'm finding lately that—not so much that I'm surprised, but again I have to find a way to work around it—is that there are people here on campus who I've met and who know what I do (her particular research area), but rather than working directly through me, they go through some of the other people like my dissertation chair, other people in the larger academic community and then I'll hear about them on the side, but I'm not necessarily brought into the process. I thought I did my due diligence by introducing myself and letting people know about my work. … But, still, sometimes, it's like, "Oh, by the way, she's here too, so I guess we'll tell her the day before that this is happening as opposed to being a part of the planning, being integral, inviting her to do book chapters, that sort of thing." There are people who I've introduced myself to and they know I am in this work and I've worked with the same people they're inviting, but they don't bring me in.

Gemina discusses the difficulty in collaborating with colleagues who overlook or deny her ability to be a valuable contributor. In the comment below, however, Dana, a faculty member in the humanities, makes clear that this questioning of women of color's intellect and legitimacy as scholars occurs from the time they enter graduate school and continues on, perhaps even intensifies, as they progress through the academic system.

> All I can think about is the baggage that we carry from graduate school to post-doc to faculty, when does that ever leave? I think about that now, when you feel shut down and you're not valued how that carries over to writing your dissertation and on and on and on. I'm just wondering when that ever gets unwound.

The perceptions and reactions women of color scholars experience from their academic peers can eventually erode the way they come to view and asses themselves. A cycle of self-doubt precipitated by others' racist and sexist expectations is then set into motion. Where is and what should be the intervention that disrupts this cycle? There must be concrete and intentional programs established in the pipeline to address the psychological damage that ultimately impacts the career success of women of color. The

period directly following PhD attainment may serve as an ideal time to offer women of color the space and time to develop their research projects, publish and receive individualized mentoring within a supportive environment through postdoctoral appointments.

The devaluing of women of color's research and intellect undermines the University's potential to capitalize on the fact that, as Antonio (2002) points out, minorities are generally at the forefront of broadening the conception of scholarship. The creativity, academic rigor and excellence women of color bring to the University of Michigan must be formally acknowledged in their departments beyond the context of minority- or diversity-related committees and programs. Stereotypes regarding the intellectual capabilities and academic productivity of women and minorities are one of the greatest impediments to changing the status, perception and reception of women of color faculty members within their departments. Race- and gender-based notions of what a "real" academic should look, sound and act like directly affects not only the hiring rates of women of color faculty, but also the quality of these women's daily lives once they enter departmental settings where they are disrespected and made invisible.

2) *Departmental Service and Committee Work: The Burden of Representing*

Women of color faculty must represent their race, gender and the theoretical principle of diversity through not only their participation in public events and committees but also through their everyday presence within their departments. Therefore, in both formal and informal as well as specially orchestrated and quotidian ways, women of color are continually saddled with the mandate to represent. Through this constant overrepresentation of their ascribed identities (of color and female) the other aspects of identity among women of colors, as well as their skills and capabilities, get denied and buried. Being asked to sit on various committees is not a compliment when you are never asked to contribute in, as one woman of color puts it, a "non-diversity context."

Committee work can take up a lot of precious time, especially for untenured faculty who must find ways to balance, at a minimum, writing and research with their teaching load. In addition, committee work does not typically have a positive impact on tenure decisions. And yet, refusing to do this work and potentially angering peers and

administrators could be used to create a picture of the woman of color as uncooperative and not collegial. Ultimately, excessive service demands, as has been pointed out in the research on faculty of color and race-related service (Baez 2000), inhibits professional advancement and is a structural problem that directly affects the tenure process.

Kai, a current faculty member in a department in a STEM field, reveals the professional price men and women of color pay when they become overcommitted to departmental service work:

> Science is hard. I mean, it's hard to publish. It's hard to really do important work. I think when you have a lot of other distractions that don't really count so much towards your tenure package, like committee work—yes, you're expected to do it, but just that it has to be on your CV. So, what really counts is your research and your publication. Other things can be distracting. Maybe this is something we can come back to, because one issue I think for women in general, but more particularly men and women of color, is that committees that want to promote diversity, which is a good goal, then always try to get those people on their committees. I think they're probably asked more than the average person to participate in committee work, which is good for the committees, but maybe not that good for that person professionally, because then you become a professional committee person and have less time for your work.

Lucy, a faculty member in a STEM field, recognizes how the additional service requirements generally imposed on women of color, combined with the fact that they tend to provide more student mentoring than the white male faculty, create impossible demands on women of color's time and energy:

> There is a lot of pressure here that majority communities don't recognize. Not just as a woman but as a woman of color in terms of demands on your time. So you have all of the other requirements as normal faculty—white male faculty—but in addition to that you have all of the mentoring that goes on with women students and students of color and then every time there is some type of public forum they have to show their diversity by having someone of color on this committee and that committee. So you're asked to represent all the time. And I think a lot of women of color feel a commitment to serving those students and so it becomes a little more difficult.

Tamara expresses her frustration with the mandate to represent when you are one of a limited number of women of color faculty members at a large research university like the U of M operating within an expressed mission to increase diversity and inclusion.

> I know I get asked to be on a lot of panels because they want diversity. So, the time I could be concentrating on my work, I'm sitting on a panel so they have a black female face up there.

For the women of color faculty members sitting on diversity committees (which are different from and in addition to the usual departmental service committees on which most faculty are expected to participate), it can begin to feel like they alone are doing the work that the entire University community should be engaged in and held accountable for. In the meantime, their research projects and professional development flounder. Thus, women of color commit a large portion of their time to supporting an institution wherein their marginal status along with a lack of reciprocal support may mean eventual tenure denial.

In perhaps an even more blatant example of the irony of the sacrifices women of color make to support unsupportive units and departments, Amy, a current faculty member in a STEM department, shares her experience of being dismissed while participating on a departmental diversity committee:

> I've been on the same committee for three years. Everyone else on the committee is white. I can tell that sometimes my opinion doesn't matter as much even when saying the same thing as someone else. My statement will get ignored or dismissed and the white male's will get acknowledged and praised, and I will have said the same thing he did but ten minutes prior. There are definitely issues like that but it is not worth it every time to fight it, only when it really matters. Otherwise you can burn out.

The service obligations placed on women of color faculty at the University Michigan are compounded when these women are working across disciplines and departments in joint appointment.

3) *Joint Appointments*

One of the University of Michigan's greatest strengths is its focus on interdisciplinarity and innovative scholarship. This scholarly commitment is often manifested through joint appointments for academics working across the boundaries of traditional departments, fields or disciplines. Although many women of color attest to the

positive aspects of holding joint appointments, such as getting feedback on their work from a wide range of colleagues, being engaged in lively discussions, establishing generative collaborations, and having the freedom to develop new courses, taking advantage of these assets becomes impossible when the administrative requirements from each department become overwhelming. Out of the seven former faculty members interviewed, five cited impossible workloads based on their joint, and sometimes even triple, appointments as the primary reason that working at other institutions became more appealing. Susan, a former jointly appointed faculty member, states:

> I left because I could not be overburdened any more with the overwhelming amount of work that came with the joint appointments. I now have time to really focus on my research and not all of the departmental meetings and administrative stuff. I have time for the most important things - my research and my family.

And, Brenda, a current faculty member with a joint appointment adds:

> It gets very demanding, and the negative things that come along with it are not recognized. A lot of the labor that goes on gets lost, and it can push people out. If I leave this university, I am going to a place where I have one appointment. I think the joint appointment is one of the biggest weights in my life here. I've had the chance to get to know a handful of women of color who were tenured when I got here or got tenure while I was here who have chosen to leave, and almost every single one of them says it is because of the service and, in terms of joint appointments, multiple service. It is just impossible. It really is impossible. Throw into the situation the general age of junior faculty and their desire to have families and it becomes even more impossible. So that has been one of my greatest difficulties here. And, the scary thing is that I didn't even know it.

Joint appointments are found among faculty members engaged in non-traditional work that, given its innovative nature, crosses disciplinary boundaries. In most cases "non-traditional" can be another way to define research conducted by or on minorities. Below, Brenda discusses her shock in finding out that a white female job candidate in her department was not going to be hired as a joint appointment, and how this revelation highlights the overloaded service requirements and unequal expectations women of color with joint appointments at the University must negotiate.

And she [white female job candidate] said, 'What do you mean? I don't have a joint appointment.' And I was surprised because in my world, meaning where I'm located in the University, everyone has joint appointments, I mean maybe not everybody, maybe not two or three, but almost everybody I know has joint appointments, and so I assumed that she would too. I don't know how to put this but she does not do…she works on White Europeans, I don't. I think her subject matter might factor into how she has a joint appointment or not. Before I talked to her I just assumed that this is the world, this is the universe, this is life and so live it. But that little comment she made opened my eyes to the idea that, oh, so if she came, she would be in one department and one have set of meetings to go to and have a totally different life than I have, and this had never occurred to me before.

Brenda continues to explain how she developed an understanding of the inequities inherent in joint appointments:

One of my directors said in a meeting that only a small percentage of people in my college in the university had joint appointments. Wow. So, you could have blown me over that she [the white job candidate in her department] wasn't the anomaly in the bigger scheme of things, but I was and my peers were. And I don't want to blow my cover here but surprise, surprise most of us do work on people of color, or ethnicity, sexuality and minorities. And then I realized what maybe life was like for 80, I don't know, maybe 90 percent of the people who have one group. I feel like I have three jobs.

The following comment from a former faculty member with three appointments in the humanities supports Brenda's point:

You want to help build interdisciplinarity and assist in the progress of all the departments you are a part of, but this was impossible to do, because the departmental structures don't really allow this. It is all on the individual and, of course, most of these individuals tend to be people of color, who are expected to make it work across the strict departmental guidelines and boundaries. We are expected to do amazing, creative things that aren't really even supported through structures, resources or respect.

4) *Secret Codes: The Lack of Transparency in Tenure Processes*

Time and time again, women of color report that the expectations within their department are vague, inconsistent, and shrouded in secrecy. Key requirements are not written down or verbally communicated in a formal way, but discovered through the

faculty grapevine or randomly stumbled upon. This haphazard way of disseminating and gathering information about the tenure process only increases the vulnerability of women of color in settings where their marginal status makes receiving the necessary information even more difficult than for their non-minority junior faculty peers. The more time that they spent in their departments, the more the women of color in this study realized that getting ahead is not just about being smart and working hard. The politics of informal networks can have just as much, if not greater, impact on a woman of color's ability to gain departmental inclusion, academic recognition and, ultimately, tenure as achievements based on merit. June, a former faculty member in one of the professional schools, compares how she was evaluated as a researcher in Asia with her experience at the University of Michigan:

> If you're good, you're good, regardless of if you're a woman, if you're Asian or whatever, it doesn't matter. They know that you are good. The criteria used to measure you are just straightforward. It doesn't matter how you talk or how you dress or how you behave. If whatever you say makes sense, people accept it. So, when I came here it was—oh, my gosh. So, I came here with a very naïve perception of the world. In Asia, too, you get where you are based on merit. If you are good, you get to where you want to go. It was very simple. You get ten A's, okay, fine, you're going to get into this program. When I came here, I said, 'This is totally different.' But, it took me a while to understand that, because I was just so naïve. My experiences prior to all these things were kind of simple. If you're good, you're good. The criteria are there, and there's transparency. You have the paper to read and you present it, and well, you are good, that's fine.

June, as well as the other women of color in this study, demonstrates that blind faith in the concept of meritocracy (the idea that you will be rewarded for working hard and producing quality outcomes) will not, alone, lead to successful careers, equal pay, respectful treatment, and emotional well-being for women of color faculty at the University of Michigan.

Tamara discusses the vagueness of the standards for "good" scholarship and the importance of establishing non-contentious relationships with departmental colleagues to counteract the subjective nature of the tenure review process:

> It's kind of a mystery as to what's considered good scholarship. The standards are as clear as they can be, but it's very subjective. In both our

recent tenure denial cases, the candidates got over half the faculty voting in favor, but you need two-thirds. So there are all these debates about whether this is good scholarship or not. Some people published in great journals, and other people liked the work, but if the faculty doesn't like it, you're in trouble. That's why collegiality is such a big deal here. I mean, you can have other people in the field saying 'I'm an expert in X, I think this is good work.' The faculty will read those outside reviews, but they really make their own determination, so you really feel as though you have to make your colleagues like you. If they're on the borderline, liking you might make a difference. The man I told you about, the one who asked if I was going to name my daughter 'Shaniqua,' he's on the tenure committee. So, you can't go off. You'd be crazy to go off. You just smile and say no and you move on because you don't want to be the angry black woman. It could mean not getting tenure…even if you've been offended.

In the statement above, Tamara references an encounter she had with a white male senior faculty member in her department. Although the senior male professor made an offensive comment to Tamara rooted in stereotypes of African American culture, Tamara felt constrained by the fact that anything less than a collegial and good-natured response on her part could be used against her in the long run during her bid for tenure. Women of color faculty, especially African American women, realize that any time they take a decisive stand or make a bold statement they are in danger of being forever labeled "troublemakers," "angry black women," "hostile," or "difficult." So, the choice becomes swallowing your pride or committing career suicide. Consequently, women of color must endure the physical, emotional and spiritual health effects of this impossible decision. This is an additional consequence of the coded nature of tenure evaluations and promotion decisions: the constant feeling of being unable to fully be yourself and stand up for your convictions without professional retribution.

Amy, currently in a department in the STEM field, talks about how being out of the informal networking loop in her department is adversely affecting her preparation plans for tenure:

I am very busy with my own research so I feel like I am not aware of the traditions in the department. I could attribute this to being a woman of color or just not being friends with the faculty who could share this information. So, there were teaching issues with the courses I was teaching. I didn't know that there were types of teaching I had to do to get tenure even though other new people in the department knew this. Almost

all other assistant professors knew this. Now that it is getting closer and closer to promotion time, I am getting really frustrated that I am just learning this information.

The lack of clarity around tenure extends beyond the requirements for preparation exhibited in Amy's case to include the actual tenure decision-making process itself. June, the former faculty member in the professional school, highlights the confusion that surrounded her negative tenure decision:

> When I went up, they did not give me tenure. Even though the tenure committee, when I sent them my documents, my credentials looked good… I did not know when they met; I did not know what they said. There was absolutely no transparency. When the tenure decision came out and said you did not get tenure, nobody told me anything. No information whatsoever. It's like an old boys' club. I was totally confused. Normally, they tell you all these things, but I had no idea. In the meantime, two other women were denied tenure, too. Three women were denied tenure that round. One is an Asian woman, too. I think she got tenure the following year. A new chair came in. I think it's something to do with the chair.

Angela, a faculty member in the social sciences makes a statement that was echoed by the majority of women interviewed for this study:

> Nobody should be surprised when tenure comes up. If you don't get tenure, that should not be a surprise to you, but for so many women of color it is, unfortunately.

5) *Teaching and Mentoring: Mentoring Students*

Above and beyond their teaching requirements, women of color at the University of Michigan spend a great deal of time as well as emotional energy mentoring and advocating for students. Research on the heavy mentoring responsibilities of minority faculty generally highlights the fact that women of color spend an exorbitant amount of time working outside of the classroom with students of color (Johnson and Harvey, 2002 and Thompson and Louque, 2005). The women of color in this study demonstrate that it is not just students of color that seek them out or that they feel especially responsible for mentoring; it is also those students, regardless of race or gender, who are marginalized within the program and appear to be falling through the cracks.

Women of color at the University of Michigan notice the students in their departments who are struggling either academically or in terms of being well integrated in departmental social networks. It makes sense that women of color, accustomed to challenging their own marginality, are usually the first ones in their departments to reach out to students in trouble. Most of the students they extend support and guidance to are able to translate this assistance into success. Women of color's sensitivity to the success of all students is an invaluable resource to the University of Michigan. Their ability to identify and willingness to mentor struggling students who then go on to do well has a direct and immediate effect on the undergraduate and graduate student retention rates, which in turn impacts the ranking and reputation of their departments. This is a hidden fact whose significance cannot be overemphasized.

Below, Lucy tells the compelling story of a Latina student in her department who could have fallen through the departmental cracks if not for Lucy's ability to both perceive and intervene in her academic challenges:

> She was very active. She was a doer, but she did not have an aggressive personality. And I felt like she really got screwed by our department. She was enthusiastic about [the field] but wasn't that great academically. So, she ended up working with a marginalized emeritus professor who needless to say was not an active researcher and whose letters of recommendation would not help. And I felt that she had done so much for the department, and we let her down. And she didn't know if she was going to grad school. All of the other students were making plans, and she didn't have anything to do. So, I offered for her to work with me, and I was worried at first thinking she may be a big time drain but she wasn't – she was great! She was just fine and she was so grateful and I felt like we are the ones who should be grateful to her. And, I don't know. I guess we are supposed to treat everyone equally. But, if we are supposed to be supporting minority students, then why were we so awful to her? And she fell through the cracks. It wasn't necessarily malicious on anybody's part but I felt like at the same time we could have been a lot more proactive. So that was a red flag that things are not as peachy keen for minority students as our chair would like to have people believe.

Lucy says that she is extremely sensitive to the status of not only the underrepresented minority students in her department but all of the students who appear to get less attention and guidance from the faculty. This is extremely important in the context of not only recruiting and retaining quality students of color, but in terms of insuring that these

and all students have a positive, affirming and healthy educational experience while they are at the University of Michigan. Lucy's comment below emphasizes the significance of women of color's mentoring, especially given the lack of attention paid to the departmental climate for students by other faculty and department chairs.

> The chair would probably think that there is a good climate. I think he thinks this because we have graduated a high proportion of people of color. But for those students, they wouldn't agree with the favorable climate assessment –especially students of color.

Tamara's narrative also demonstrates the important role women of color faculty at the University of Michigan play in student retention and success:

> Students come to me because they want to have a job [in the field] and they talk to me about that. I had one African American student who was thinking about dropping out of school all together. We spent lots of sessions talking about what you really want and how you're already in your second year. She wound up staying in and she actually graduated and thanked me for convincing her to stay in. She wound up finding a job that she really liked. I like to think I can have some kind of impact. That's why we need people of color on the faculty. Maybe she wouldn't have gone to the old white guy down the hall and had these kinds of conversations. I think that's one reason it's important. Of course, it also takes up a lot of time when you could be writing. And, it's not one student, it's every black student who wants to come talk to you about something. It can be time intensive. Having more black people would mean we could spread it out…nobody cares at all. You don't get credit for that.

Madeline, a faculty member in the humanities, reveals how moved she was on her very first day of teaching at the University of Michigan when she was confronted with a Latino student who had never had a Latina professor:

> He asked if he could give me a hug because he had never had a Latina *professora* before. He had tears in his eyes. That really moved me and I really understood the importance of my role in front of that classroom.

Madeline's words are a reminder of how just simply seeing someone who looks like you, who comes from a similar racial or cultural history and background and who is in a position of esteem, can affect students' confidence and overall efficacy. This is a luxury that majority students experience without realizing its value, so naturalized is the enduring image of the white male professor. Increasing the number of minority faculty is

one essential step in the direction of creating this type of welcoming environment for all students.

6) *Teaching and Mentoring: Hostile Classrooms*

It is important to consider the unfortunate irony of women of color's role as mentors when they themselves often receive the least mentoring and inclusion within their departmental networks. In addition, although the women of color in this study are hyper aware of the needs of their students, they often receive the least respect in the classroom. Accounts depicting the ways in which minority faculty at predominantly white institutions are disrespected and undermined by students are abundant in the literature on faculty of color in higher education (Ladson-Billings, 1996; Ahlquist, 1991; and Aguirre, Hernandez and Martinez, 1994). The experiences of the women of color faculty herein support the findings in previous scholarship.

Most of these women are not as fortunate as Angela, an assistant professor in the social sciences, who has an understanding chair attuned to the racial and gender dynamics that play out in classrooms. Angela says this about her chair:

> He is not afraid to talk about how race and gender impact how I am treated by students as well as by other faculty members in my department. He has said on more than one occasion that 'Race is a required course at Michigan and they [students] are going to be resistant because they don't want to take it.'

Chairs and division heads are crucial to establishing a climate of respect for women of color within the spaces where they interact with their colleagues as well as in the classroom among undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom have never interacted with women of color in a position of authority. The interviewees in this study show that women of color at the University of Michigan are particularly vulnerable to experiencing both physical and verbal threats to their authority in the classroom from students who do not perceive them to be legitimate scholars or educators.

Sharon, an African American woman in the social sciences, discusses how the subtleties of interactions with students reveal their lack of respect:

> Students show disrespect by doing things like calling me by my first name when I know they don't do that with their male professors.

Both Lucy and Angela relate how being challenged by students in the classroom is always shaded by underlying racial and gender expectations and the questions of power, legitimacy and authority they invite. Lucy states:

> One white male was not particularly respectful. He was very challenging like he didn't think I had my act together. He played out these power struggles in class and it was pretty annoying.

And, Angela comments:

> And I don't think the students really know all of the things with the hierarchy of the junior and senior faculty members, but they know that I'm not my chair and I'm not a full professor about to retire and I think they try to manipulate that, so I try to nip that in the bud. I do think that is where my identity does get in the way and does become a challenge. And the nature of the course, talking about contentious topics, you have to learn to do that in a responsible way. Not let your emotions lead you. There has to be responsibility in the classroom. I do find that a challenge.

But what happens when women of color attempt to reassert their positions of authority and reclaim control over their classrooms? In the case of Tamara, it led to student backlash and negative evaluations. Tamara consistently had problems with her students not quieting down within a reasonable amount of time and not being attentive to her lecture. Bringing this challenge to her students' attention led to increased hostility among her predominantly white male class.

> I finally said, 'When I say let's get started, let's get started. It shouldn't come at any great shock to you when I say that because class starts at 2:35, and that's when I say let's get started. I'd like for you to show me the same respect that I think that I show you.' Hushed silence. After that, I didn't have a problem. I had somebody from CRLT come in because I wanted to get some feedback on how class was going. This was several weeks later. The consultant from CRLT told me that several students mentioned the fact that I told them to quiet down. They said, 'She really shouldn't have told us that.' And, the CRLT consultant said, 'Maybe they're angry because of gender stereotypes. You're a woman, and you're supposed to be nice to them and let them do whatever they want to do.' So, now that's making me wonder. I am very nice to my students. This was the only time I've ever said something like, 'Let's do something different.'

I try to be funny in class, try to be nice and helpful. It's making me wonder if I should come in with a different persona. But then, because I'm a woman of color, you don't want to be labeled the angry black woman. We have some male teachers on faculty who are mean to people. They will shred the students, and the students love them. I think if I did the exact same thing, oh, gosh, she's such a 'you know what.' It's one of those things where you want to create that distance, but you don't want to be labeled as a witch or anything else. That's something that probably white men don't give a second thought to. That's nothing that the faculty can necessarily do because students come in with their own biases. Many of them have never had a black woman teach them anything, possibly, much less [faculty member's specialized area of study]. If I were teaching [more expected subject for a minority professor]—it's so outside the realm of possibility for them that a black woman could have been [her highly specialized experience beyond the university]—and they're not really wrong, because I was the only one most of the time. Teaching evaluations matter. Scholarship is the most important, but teaching evaluations really matter. So, I have to care. I can't say I can't worry about their issues. Their issues are my issues, because their issues are coloring whether they bubble in a 3, 4 or 5, and that will affect me.

I have included Tamara's extended commentary because she emphasizes many of the factors that contribute to hostile classroom environments for women of color faculty: inability to assert control and authority without being labeled angry or their behavior being deemed inappropriate; student expectations that they will be overly nurturing and act as mother figures; students' inexperience with women of color in positions of authority; and the inverse power relationship demonstrated through student evaluations and complaints.

Brenda, an African American woman with a joint appointment, told the painful story of how her course, which focused on sensitive topics along the intersection of race, gender, class and sexuality, was systematically shut down by a small group of male athletes. Through Brenda's narrative, it becomes clear how the hostility, arrogance and ignorance of some students gets fed by structural factors: departmental mandates to increase the size of, or "grow." courses even when the subject matter and content of certain courses are best suited to seminar environments; pre-existing race and ethnicity requirements for courses that should be only taken voluntarily by mature students who have a respect for and interest in the subject; and the lack of an official administrative stance in support of minority and female faculty whose authority, as well as physical and

emotional safety, are constantly under threat in classrooms across campus. Brenda's story below encompasses some of the most demoralizing aspects of being a woman of color teaching at a large, predominantly white institution like the University of Michigan:

> So I was teaching a class on [sensitive subject matter across issues of race, class, gender and sexuality]. It was a class that I had taught previously. I had always experienced that class as very satisfying and fulfilling. All of the students in the class wanted to be there in the previous classes I had taught it. When I taught it here, and it had to do with structure, it had an automatic race and ethnicity requirement. And my students were very trying. I had students in the class who were hostile to the material, who were hostile to the subject matter of women of color. I had a group of men, African American men, I am actually personally disappointed to say, who were also athletes, which I don't know how or not that factors in who sat in a group, and would kind of throw out comments that were always meant to throw me off guard or to challenge me and say things to the class that I thought were sexist, and I mean we are talking about serious issues, things like Asian women sometimes forced into prostitution, and these men in class would make snide comments about how they themselves were looking for an exotic woman. It was just horrible. It was awful. The stress of the class was incredible.

Brenda goes on to recount how the classroom issues moved from verbal disrespect to a threat to her physical well-being:

> And, to manage that at the same time that I had this whole thing going on, some of the men from the same group decided they were going to plagiarize. I made the mistake of thinking, 'I'm going to talk to them and give them a chance and not take it any higher and let them make it right.' And what happened, one of them instead of taking advantage of the opportunity to not get in the system and move on, one of them got aggressive with me in the hallway. He was a very big man; he sort of cornered me against the wall and put his finger in my face, and it was horrible, and I was just trying to physically move myself out from being cornered by him, and it was late in the day, and the hallways weren't very full, and I was just trying to get away from him. He was saying that he wanted to have a private meeting in my office, and I was saying that I would only do that with my director. And, I won't go into much more about this, because it is upsetting just to call it to mind. But I ended up turning to my directors for support, and they said, 'Write a formal description for student (indecipherable), and I did that, and basically one of the students was found to have plagiarized his paper, but it was a horrible, horrible experience. I don't even want to remember it, and one of the worst things about this was that, at the end of the semester, when I was reading the take-home final exams, there were some exams that were

beautiful, intricate and so smart that were written by women in the class that I hadn't even had time to attend to, because I was dealing with these guys who at every single class were after me.

Brenda felt that her department chair handled the situation effectively once her interactions with the male student moved from inappropriate verbal behavior to actual physical danger. She would have liked, however, to have had more upfront support in terms of addressing the structural pedagogical issues, such as releasing the pressure to grow a course unsuited to large numbers of students and the mandated race and ethnicity assignment.

In her interview, Rita, a faculty member with a joint appointment, summarizes many of the themes within both Tamara and Brenda's stories. Rita's comments demonstrate that, as extreme as they may sound, these stories are not anomalies in the overall experiences of women of color faculty at the University of Michigan. In addition, Rita provides clear direction for the institution in acting responsibly to support all female faculty members within the context of hostile classroom environments.

> I have experienced and I have heard of instances where there have been some difficult male students and you might get the sort of vocal support from senior faculty around you or your director, but nothing is done about it. If nothing is done about it, you're basically saying to the student that this professor does not have the same authority and ultimately the same value as male professors and I think that really has to change. Female faculty need to feel safe in their classrooms and they need to know for sure that when they discipline a student or when they have difficulty with a student and need to be backed up that they will be backed up and that it will clearly be seen from a feminist perspective not just as a disruption between *x* faculty and *x* student. But the university needs to understand that female faculty members are particularly vulnerable to those kinds of threats to their authority in the classroom.

The race- and gender-based hostilities women of color contend with in the classroom is a recurring theme among the women interviewed for this study. Although classroom tensions were prevalent prior to Proposal 2 debates around affirmative action, many women of color faculty fear these tensions will only increase and intensify now that Proposal 2 has passed. Chandra, a former African American faculty member who held a joint appointment, cites the affirmative action debates as significant in adding to hostilities in already uncomfortable classroom environments:

There were added tensions during Prop. 2 and affirmative action debates, and I found it very difficult teaching during those times. Students expressed a lot of hostility, and some white males were very hostile.

Many "diversity-averse" students view Proposal 2's passage as a legal symbol that sanctions the disrespect and delegitimization of women and minorities. Women of color will inevitably feel the brunt of this diversity backlash, and the University of Michigan must be poised to deal with this shift in the social and political climate within its classrooms.

Social Well Being

7) *Marginalization and Lack of Social Support*

A good fit is what all job candidates and university departments hope for during the recruitment process. The components that make a good fit vary depending on the needs and interests of both the individual and the particular department. Across interviews, the twenty-eight women in this study, however, were in consensus about one key component of a good fit: inclusiveness. Being included, recognized and supported by both colleagues and the department chair is one of the greatest contributors to overall job satisfaction and personal well being for women of color faculty at the University of Michigan. And yet, the norms within departments, often founded and upheld through racist and sexist traditions, as well as the reticence of majority colleagues to view women of color as intellectual and professional peers, all too often make full inclusion impossible.

Collegiality, community and collaboration appear throughout the literature on women of color faculty as vital to their success in the academy (Baez, 2000; Butner et al 2000; Thomas and Simpson, 1995). These three Cs, however, are difficult for women of color to attain if they have been typecast as diversity hires or made to feel peripheral in their departments. Even when women of color may appear to be visible in terms of their departmental service, this study reveals that they are often invisible outside of the committee meetings and other departmental forums, where they feel they are offered only token inclusion. They are often shut out of the informal social networks where valuable information is shared and unofficial academic guidelines and codes are revealed. Mary, a

faculty member in one of the professional schools, recounts a personal encounter with a senior colleague that illuminates how women of color's colleagues may dismiss their right to be equal participants in the academic community:

> I introduced myself to a senior colleague in the faculty lounge and greeted him by his first name. He seemed to be offended by that and he said, 'Call me Dr. so and so.' I was very shocked because I had been in the States for ten years and know the social norms. I thought that now that I joined the faculty I considered him a peer, and he obviously rejected that notion. For a moment I was like, 'Wow, this person really doesn't accept'—it was obvious that he did not want to accept me as an equal and that was very, very shocking and I will never ever forget.

Women of color experience further marginalization when their behavior, style, appearance, and modes of interaction do not conform to either mainstream cultural expectations or stereotypical assumptions made based on their race, gender and ethnicity. Sally, a faculty member in one of the professional schools in the process of looking for a position at another institution, states:

> I don't fit in. I have some style problems. Maybe I say what I think. I'm pretty direct and I don't have a lot of time. Their expectation was that I would use the woman's leadership style, which is about relationships and nurturing, and I have a more of a guy's style and perhaps from a short Asian woman that was not their expectation.

Sally is reacting to the fact that her departmental colleagues found a disconnection between her style of interaction and her identity as a small Asian woman. Her small stature and Asian identity were perceived to be markers of passivity and acquiescence, and yet, her behavior dispelled this stereotype. Sally believes that if she were a white male, her so-called style problems would not only be expected but considered assets. Her refusal to fit into a prescribed role based on race and gendered assumptions makes Sally an outcast in field that is unaccustomed to women in positions of leadership and authority.

Even when colleagues are not overtly hostile or dismissive, the climate within departments can be just barely cordial enough for women of color to feel that they are tolerated but not welcomed. This can be especially demoralizing when it is clear that their male and non-minority peers have bonded in ways that leave women of color on the

outside. Amy, the only woman of color in her department, discusses the feelings of exclusion and insecurity that this type of informal in-crowd boundary making can create:

> I just talk to colleagues casually in the hallway but there is some barrier there. Some gender aggregation and male bonding. And I wonder if all women are shut out of it or just me.

All of the women interviewed suggested that collegial support must come from both junior and senior faculty. The camaraderie among the junior faculty in Mary's department is crucial to her contentment at the University of Michigan, despite the fact that she doesn't always feel like she fits as easily into the department as her white male peers. Mary states:

> I would call my department friendly. The junior faculty all get along and have potlucks. I would like to socialize with them more, and I guess I could invite them over myself, but we are all very busy. I think we, for the most part, like each other.

The relationships Mary has established with both junior and senior faculty members in her department are clearly complicated and constantly shifting, as evidenced by the way she discusses feeling simultaneously comfortable within, yet somehow on the outskirts of, the faculty community. Mary's conditional acceptance in her department is brought to life through her story of being snubbed by the senior colleague who demanded she address him by title. The disjuncture between surface collegiality and deeper structural exclusion is not always as graphically defined for women of color as in Mary's case. However, all women of color must negotiate the overall friendly department environment with the knowledge that they will have to continually prove and defend themselves and their scholarship in ways their majority colleagues will not. Thus, women of color in the academy can feel as if, regardless of how welcoming a particular departmental environment may seem, they must constantly be on the defensive to negate potential unfavorable assumptions and leveled expectations. The self-doubt and anxiety that this causes can lead to compromised physical and mental health over the long run, especially if women do not have a supportive network where they can express and manage the implications of dealing with this psychic alienation.

Considering the physical, emotional and social toll marginalization can take on women of color's overall well being, it is not surprising that the women in this study mention a community of other women of color faculty as something they would like to create. Although they identify time constraints and the lack of a critical mass of women of color across the university as the biggest obstacles in establishing this network, Brenda identifies another major impediment: suspicious colleagues. Below Brenda describes the response within her department when a group of women of color faculty starting meeting informally to offer one another support:

> There was a woman of color group that started to get together, you know, talking and that actually became a recognizable—I mean I don't want to make it seem too formalized but—a recognizable group. Social is how it began, and this was really good. But it became a problem. Basically the social group began with dinner at somebody's house where all the junior women of color were invited. But then that same year third year reviews started happening and there was some concern about some junior men of color who may have been getting negative reviews, and this wasn't all very clear because of confidentiality, but, you know, through the grapevine and that sort of led women of color to take action around how do we improve these reviews. That became sort of politicized and it became an issue, and we even had a faculty retreat around these issues. The good thing is that now we have a faculty retreat almost every year. I think the retreat was a positive outcome but there is no question that it became very uncomfortable because they felt that there was a platform that we were putting forward or something like that. It becomes so visible. ... It's visible in a way that if a group of junior white colleagues got together it wouldn't be even noticed. Nobody would say, 'Oh, junior white colleagues!' So, that whatever our group was has kind of dissipated over time probably because it got criticized, and it got politicized like we were trying to change policy or something like that.

Social support, regardless of where it comes from, is not only welcomed by women of color but also identified as one of the most critical contributors to either their success or failure. Being included in one's departmental community means much more than feeling accepted; it is the key to professional development and personal satisfaction and affects everything from informal mentoring, the ability to collaborate on research, positive visibility, recognition of work, grant acquisition, and tenure. As Gemina, a faculty member in the social sciences, states:

Being isolated in any situation is never fun, but in academia it is so hard because there is so much to do that if you are doing it all alone, not only are you not getting synergy and not getting help and assistance, but you are also not going to be as successful.

8) *Balancing Social and Family Life with Work*

Although gender roles and expectations are evolving within the contexts of the home and the academy, women still carry a disproportionate amount of the responsibility for maintaining their households and raising children. Therefore, even though balancing family and work is a significant concern for all faculty members, women are much more likely to be professionally penalized when the negotiation of these life spheres becomes increasingly difficult to manage. Women of color at the University of Michigan reveal that sustaining a healthy family and social life with the work necessary to achieve tenure and promotion is an area where there are virtually no institutional supports and guidelines for how to attain a workable balance. In the statement below, Sylvia, an Asian faculty member in a department in the STEM fields, discusses the conflicted feelings she has around encouraging the younger women she mentors to enter academe. Despite the fact there is a dearth of women in the STEM fields, Sylvia feels that ethics require her to weigh the tremendous sacrifices women must make in their personal and family lives with the prospect of career success.

> I was asked to mentor young women and did not know if I should tell them to pursue a career in this field. But it just struck me, 'Do I want to get the girls in the same position?' I mean we all love our jobs, but we know we sacrifice big time for that. When I mentor other young women, it is hard for me to tell them that this is the type of work they should go into because of all the sacrifices that are made with family and children and what happens in the home.

Mary's decision to focus on getting tenure rather than growing her family is an uneasy resolution that clearly reflects the sacrifices Sylvia mentions above. Mary's narrative highlights the unique pressures of being a female academic and managing long-term family and life plans within the context of inflexible tenure track timelines.

> It is tough to balance everything with scheduling time for child and working. And, I don't see it getting better for women after they get tenure. Now that illusion is gone. I think it gets harder. Most women get their degrees in their twenties and thirties when they want to start a family. I

don't know how they are doing it and managing it, a baby or a serious relationship. I have one child but I actually wanted to have two or three, and me and my husband put a lot into thinking about this and we decided no way. And I look at my CV and it wasn't like I wrote five articles a year, but I did regret the fact that I decided not to have a child. I really sacrificed that for my career. But that was my decision. It is the whole culture that increasingly indicates that you have to dive in and be super committed to your work. There is this pressure. But when I started my son was three and it would have been the perfect time to have a child but I didn't. I will regret this forever. I really get emotional about whether that was really the right decision. I am happy with my career but knew I could not have an infant when I was in the tenure stage. I think that flexible clock would be good or extending the clock. But still it is never really direct, like 'You can't do this,' but I couldn't imagine being able to raise a child. I would have felt guilty. It was hard enough trying to raise a child while in graduate school. They basically give you five years to make sure you are good enough but that is so artificial and so unfair to me. This has nothing to do with color but with women surviving in academia.

The self-judgment and internal struggles that women of color face in managing family and professional priorities become exacerbated by their children's frustration with their hectic schedules and a work ethic that one faculty member defines as being "so incessant that it almost becomes self destructive and counter productive—especially where family is concerned, but also for your own mental and physical health." Jane, a faculty member in the humanities, describes how her teenage son compares his assessment of her success as a mother with her success as a professor:

> I always feel like the worst parent. The other day my son said to me, 'You know in terms of your work and your publications you are great, but as a mother you're not so great.' So there is some judgment and it is very hard.

In their interviews, single faculty members state that they face many of the same struggles to balance work and their personal lives as women with families. Single women reveal that the demands of their own research projects and mandates to publish or perish, coupled with departmental service obligations, makes finding time to care for self and develop a healthy social life out of the question. Angela, who holds a tenure-track position in the social sciences, discusses the necessity of having time to nurture potential relationships and establish a network of supportive people outside of work:

I was beginning to feel like I am always asked to be a part of job talk and departmental service stuff because I am single and don't have children. But my chair really took that into consideration and stopped asking me even though I was just kidding. I think this is indicative of the sensitivity in the department, where they don't want people to ever feel slighted or targeted because of any structural or cultural characteristic. It takes time to nurture children but it also takes time to meet people to start a family. I don't think there is the same consideration if you are single. But, if you don't have a family, you need time to go out and develop your network–probably more time than someone who already has a family.

Jane summarizes the feelings of the majority of single women of color in this study when she broaches the topic of women's emotional lives and the prioritization of starting a family. Although the theme of social and romantic life emerged in all of the interviews, Jane was the boldest in articulating the fact that personal relationships and emotional health are not isolated from the rest of women of color's lives, but essential to overall productivity, well-being and ultimately, the decision to leave or stay at the University of Michigan. Jane even identifies the important role that the University can play in improving women of color's social lives and providing venues where they can develop personal networks.

So for me all these years I am a single parent. I am running back and forth to [location of research], and I'm a single parent. It is horrible. I don't have another life. I don't go to movies. I don't watch TV. I am a workaholic. Cooking for my children is my entertainment, is my relaxation. I don't have time for exercise. I just don't have time for myself at all. But these things are so important, because you have to ask, 'What about my emotional life?' For your spiritual life you can go to church, but nobody provides for my emotional life. I know that [former faculty member friend in another department] left because she couldn't see the possibility of meeting someone here, of building a family. There has to be something that the University can do to address this. It is important and it wouldn't take that many resources and time. People need to have their emotional lives cared for, or they will not stay here.

Dana supports and extends Jane's thoughts on the necessity of having a full, balanced emotional and spiritual life by contemplating the physical and mental health costs of being a woman of color at the University of Michigan:

I mean, I think in pretty much all areas, still I think women of color feel that they have to do more and better. It's heartbreaking to see that, you know? So, everything—I feel like a lot of women of color overshoot

constantly and you can see the effects of that, actual physical effects, like health and mental as well. I had all this leave. If I didn't, I don't know what I would look like right now. Three semesters of leave.

What Has a Positive Impact?

While the women in this study discussed the barriers to their success and full inclusion at the University of Michigan, they also readily identified the things that are working well and do have a positive impact on both their professional and personal lives. It is essential to weigh the positive with the negative in order to devise solutions with the greatest potential for effecting change. The positive aspects of life at Michigan for women of color faculty include structural factors, departmental initiatives, and individual behaviors.

Official Upper Administrative Stances on Diversity Issues

Several of the women interviewed explained that the visibility and outspokenness of the University's upper-level administration on diversity-related issues makes them feel supported. This feeling may not counteract the discriminatory acts and exclusion that occurs within specific departments, but it can make a difference in terms of overall morale.

Below, Lucy discusses her perception of the University's commitment to diversity:

> On the whole, my personal take on it, at least comparing to other institutions that I've been at, is that it's very good. I find it impressive that Mary Sue Coleman will stand in the freezing cold on the Diag and tell everybody the vote and the recent amendment against affirmative action was horrible and Michigan's going to fight tooth and nail against that. I think that kind of leadership means a lot…I haven't gotten a sense, yet, of what they actually do about these things, but the fact that they care already means a lot.

University Supported Initiatives, ADVANCE

Other women stated that University-supported programs like ADVANCE are making a visible difference in their departmental climate, and are changing the way faculty members think about and respond to questions of gender and difference. These

changing attitudes impact hiring practices and contribute to a more favorable climate for all faculty members. Kai mentions this in her interview:

> The one thing that is true is that Michigan makes every effort to be progressive. I've been on a couple of faculty search committees since I've been here, and the STRIDE committee came in and made a presentation about this. I thought it was very interesting because sometimes there are biases that are not apparent, that we're really barely aware of, that everybody has. I thought being made aware of that was really great. I think part of the problem is that as we go through these hiring processes, we're not aware of them.

Lucy talks specifically about the positive changes initiated in her department through the ADVANCE efforts. It is important to note, however, that programs such as ADVANCE can be successful only when they are fully supported by the department chair. In this way, the project priorities become institutionalized within the department's culture and understood by all faculty and staff members as central to the department's values and objectives.

> I think there is a concerted effort, because prior to 2000 they had zero women, I think, and had zero women for ages and ages (in her department). And, they attempted to hire senior women to try to get over the hump quickly before them, but hadn't succeeded, I believe. And with the assistance of the ADVANCE Program, we've really benefited from that. It's made a huge difference just because it's such a small department, and because our chair is proactive. On the whole I think it is favorable. And, with respect to the number of women, I think the climate for women in particular is very good, in part because this is a high profile thing.

University Supported Initiatives, Spousal Hires

Charlene, a faculty member in one of the professional schools, states that Michigan's accommodation of spouses was a key factor in her decision to come to the University, and has directly impacted her quality of life in Ann Arbor.

> One of the things that I think is good not just in my department but in Michigan, which is definitely better than it was at my former institutions, and this is one of the things that I think is really great about the University of Michigan: They make the effort to accommodate spouses and families. The fact that they understand the importance of this makes you feel valued by the university and interested in becoming a part of the institution.

Kelly, a professor in the humanities, states:

> With all other things being pretty much equal, it really was the way that the University assisted in helping my husband find work that really made the difference. There was a strong and true commitment to helping our entire family feel like they could thrive here, not just me. I think this is important, in the end, if you want folks to stay at Michigan. This is so true, especially for women of color who may be lacking support systems in other areas like within their department or in the larger Ann Arbor community, which can feel pretty homogenous.

Although Charlene and Kelly highlight how something like accommodating spouses can positively affect the decision to come to the University of Michigan, it is important to remember that the treatment and acceptance within women of color's actual departments ultimately determines whether they stay or decide to leave. Spousal hires and spousal accommodations may impact recruitment, but it appears to be the departmental climate that is the determining factor in retention.

Departmental Initiatives

Mentoring Programs and Support for Junior Faculty

When a faculty member's identity as a women of color is coupled with her status as a junior faculty member, her perception of her department as a potentially hostile and intimidating space is doubly heightened. Several women of color interviewed for this study, however, identified both informal and formal support for junior faculty as critical to their feeling of inclusion within and value to their departments. Support for junior faculty enables women of color assistant professors to find solidarity with other junior faculty and implement effective ways to address those issues of concern that impact all junior faculty members.

Margaret, a researcher in one of the professional schools, says:

> My main goal was to find a department that I thought would really facilitate my research, and the department here is tremendous, so I have many, many colleagues with which I have a lot in common, so that has made this a great professional place to be. But I think one of the other things that also make this a good department, besides the research being very close to what I do and having a lot of resources, is that the

department is very nurturing. They really nurture junior faculty to a very advanced extent. Senior faculty seem to feel as if it is their role to take on extra departmental service so that junior faculty are not overburdened during the pre-tenure years.

Cynthia, a new faculty member in the social sciences, adds:

It's only since I've been here that I've realized how graciously—and I'm not aware of it like, 'Oh, we're doing so much for you.' It's done completely graciously, just as a matter of course to make every opportunity available to me. I really, really appreciate it, especially since it's not held over my head, like 'We're doing so much for you so we want you to do whatever, other than to succeed.' They want you to succeed!

Below, Tina, a faculty member jointly appointed in the social sciences, describes a more formal junior faculty support network that was initiated by junior faculty members themselves:

The junior faculty (most of whom are now tenured) in my department established a formal network for junior faculty. It is a wonderful space because we not only help sort out things like tenure expectations and teaching requirements, but we also support and promote each others' work. We even work together to bring in outside speakers and put on special events to highlight our collective work. So, it is like a professional support and professional development thing. And, we have really almost forced the senior faculty to take responsibility for mentoring us. It works, but we need to be supported by the senior faculty and have funds that we can have access to.

Tina makes the important point that nurturing of junior faculty requires the commitment of senior faculty, along with the financial resources to support the types of events and initiatives that create a sense of community for junior faculty as well as bring attention to their scholarship.

Supportive Chairs

The department chair continued to emerge in these interviews as a pivotal figure in determining whether or not all of these concerns—departmental climate, support for junior faculty, valuing of diverse scholarship, and the inclusion of women of color faculty, for example—get addressed. The chair has the power to establish the departmental climate and influence senior faculty members. The

statements made by the faculty members below demonstrate the critical difference a supportive chair can make in retaining women of color faculty.

Angela discusses the positive impact of her chair's professional style and protocol for making decisions:

> The fact that our chair tells us things as they are. Tells us what his decisions are based on. Night and day from the previous placement where decisions were made behind closed doors and things changed from one episode to the next. So this is like a total breath of fresh air. He is not afraid to address diversity directly—offer support and acknowledge different needs.

Michelle, an assistant professor in the social sciences, explains why her chair was influential in changing the hostile dynamics within her department and, ultimately, impacting her decision to stay at the University of Michigan:

> I wouldn't still be here if it wasn't for my chair. I don't know if people realize how much a good chair can turn a bad department around. Or, should I say an inhospitable department around. A supportive chair who really understands the importance of diversity as more than just having black and brown bodies around—who understands the importance of supporting diverse scholarship and alternative methodologies for approaching scholarship—can really impact how the faculty as a whole responds to work that is not part of what is seen as mainstream work in the social sciences. The chair has to have integrity, be committed to the ideals of diversity and really want to see junior women of color do well.

Vibrant Community of Women of Color Faculty

Although it is clear from the words contributed by the women of color in this study, as well as the statistics on recruitment and retention rates of women of color across campus, that women of color do not make up a critical mass at the University of Michigan, it is important to understand what it would mean to women of color faculty if this long-standing trend were reversed. What would it mean if women of color felt as if they were more than token additions to their department? In some departments at the University of Michigan, women of color comprise enough of a

sizable minority that they do feel a sense of community and support from other women of color faced with many of the same challenges and concerns.

Faculty members who participate in the Women of Color in the Academy Project (WOCAP) identify this as one space where they are able to safely address common concerns outside of their departments while also developing social networks with other women of color. WOCAP also provides venues for junior faculty to receive mentoring and career advice from more senior colleagues. Although WOCAP does do a good job of providing women of color with much-needed support, this should not preclude the support that must be in place at the departmental level and through broader University-wide initiatives in order for women of color faculty to be successful.

Brenda highlights the difference increased representation of other women of color can make both in women of color faculty's professional and personal lives.

> You have no idea what it means to see that you are not the only one. But, I think, more than that, to have a group of smart, vibrant, supportive women of color who get you and understand your work. That is invaluable. Even if we don't get to meet up as a group that often, it means so much to know that they are there, going through many of the same things you are and ready to support you and get your back if need be. I doubt that folks in the majority population will ever understand how critical that type of community support is. They are so used to always having it. But, for us, in these types of majority white institutions, even a small community is still a community and can be the reason why you are able to endure in this environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on the suggestions of the twenty-eight women of color faculty members who participated in this study, along with insight gleaned from ongoing discussions with the Women of Color in the Academy Project's steering committee. Women of color faculty emphasize the importance of not placing the responsibility for supporting and implementing these initiatives with the usual suspects: underrepresented minorities, women and the faculty, staff and administrators already engaged in diversity work. All members of the University community, but especially those in positions of visibility, influence and power, must be held accountable for creating change within the University of Michigan. In advocating for women of color faculty, these recommendations inevitably support the excellence and prosperity of the University as a whole.

The need for commitments by University leaders is one of the overriding factors women of color faculty identify as essential in even beginning to think about creating positive institutional change. If diversity education is to be effective, individuals holding positions of leadership within the University's organizational structure must model the vision of an inclusive environment that celebrates diversity as more than benign difference.

Students and faculty members at the University of Michigan in increasing numbers are beginning to see "diversity" as a superficial, meaningless term that functions simply as a bureaucratic tool. Supporters of institutional change, as well as those seeking to maintain the status quo, seem to have a very superficial understanding of the benefits of a diverse educational setting. There needs to be consistent and effective forums to address how the concept of "diversity" is being thought of, discussed and implemented across the University of Michigan campus, and what both the smaller concrete and larger ideological goals are for achieving TRUE diversity. This will require all University constituents, but especially those with decision-making authority, to acknowledge their own positions of privilege and power and be willing to fearlessly address the structural racism, sexism and overall xenophobia that undermines the University of Michigan's

mission for academic excellence. The academy, and the U of M more specifically, must "continue to be a site for political struggle and radical transformation."[11]

The following recommendations from the women of color faculty mirror the core recommendations presented by Waltman and Hollenshead in *A Collection of Suggested Procedures for Improving the Climate for Women Faculty Members*, prepared for the ADVANCE Departmental Transformation Grant at the University of Michigan. Their core recommendations fall under three categories: *Transparency*, making all kinds of information available and easy to find; *Uniformity*, leveling the playing field and dealing equitably with all faculty; and *Assistance*, attending to the needs of faculty by offering mentoring and other types of help.[12]

I. <u>Mentoring</u>

Require all departments to develop and be held accountable for formal mentoring structures for all junior faculty members.

From the perspective of women of color at the University of Michigan, the informal, behind the scenes information passed through what many call "the old boys" network is one of the most valuable resources in gaining promotion and tenure and generally establishing a strong academic career. The discrepancies between the mentoring received by white male faculty and women or minority faculty have been well documented. Women of color at the U of M express that, even within departments where there are established formal mentoring programs, they have to work hard at actively seeking the mentoring they need.

We recommend that all departments be required to establish formal mentoring structures. Formal mentoring should include mentoring teams comprised of senior faculty members who may provide a variety of perspectives to meet the varied academic, social and political needs of women of color faculty. Based on this research with women of color junior faculty at the U of M, formal mentoring should also include:

- Teaching support

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[11] Mohanty, 2006

[12] This best practices document is based on interviews and focus groups with both male and female faculty at the University of Michigan, who were asked to describe the initiatives that could contribute to a supportive environment that facilitates academic career success.

- Departmental service expectations
- Decoding of the unspoken, unwritten departmental rules
- Preparation for tenure

Additionally, mentoring women of color faculty should not be relegated only to female faculty or faculty of color. From the perspectives of many women of color, what matters more than the race and gender of the mentor is the mentor's willingness to understand the unique burdens of female faculty of color, willingness to advocate on their behalf, a sensitivity to departmental micro-politics and ability to communicate openly about issues of race and gender. Margaret, a faculty member in one of the professional schools, explains the critical difference a supportive mentoring environment makes in her experience as part of the junior faculty.

> But I think one of the other things that also make this a good department besides the research being very close to what I do and having a lot of resources, is that the department is very nurturing. They really nurture junior faculty to a very advanced extent. Senior faculty seem to feel as if it is their role to take on extra departmental service so that junior faculty are not overburdened during the pre-tenure years.

II. Recruitment

Preparing the Immediate Pipeline: Develop postdoctoral opportunities to support the advancement of excellent women of color scholars.

Departments, especially those in the social sciences and humanities that typically do not hire post-docs, should target outstanding PhD recipients to bring into their departments in two-year post-doc positions. The targeted PhDs would be candidates who demonstrate, through their research, teaching and outreach activities, that they are committed to enhancing diversity at the University of Michigan. The President's Postdoctoral Fellowship Program at the University of California provides a long-established, successful model for this type of initiative. The focus of the postdoctoral program would be on the positive diversity outcomes candidates would bring to the university through research, community work and theoretical engagements that are typically marginalized within the academy. There would undoubtedly be a high number of women of color in this category.

During the two-year post-doc period, these individuals would be given time to publish articles; revise their dissertations and develop book prospectuses; become familiar with the particular structure and expectations of their home departments; and receive structured, consistent mentoring from other faculty members. In addition, the cohort of post-docs across departments could meet on a regular basis to offer support to one another and attend professionalization seminars and other educational forums to prepare them for the cultural shift from graduate student to faculty member. At the end of the two years, the post-docs would be well positioned to be on the tenure track. Below, Dana, a current faculty member jointly appointed in the humanities, demonstrates how what happens to women of color in the early career development stages in graduate school and during postdoctoral work can establish (for better or for worse) the foundation for the rest of their careers. Guidance and support during these times prior to a tenure-track appointment can equip women of color for both the obstacles and expectations that lie ahead.

> All I can think about is the baggage that we carry from graduate school to postdoc to faculty, when does that ever leave? I think about that now, when you feel shut down and you're not valued how that carries over to writing your dissertation and on and on and on. I'm just wondering when that ever gets unwound.

Cluster Hires: Recruit several faculty members at one time whose work lies outside of the department's traditional core curriculum.

Search committees must consciously work to recruit several candidates at one time whose work lies outside of the traditional core curriculum in a given department. In this way these candidates, typically underrepresented minorities, may be afforded the opportunity to develop the type of built-in professional and social support system that majority faculty are privileged to enjoy. This, in turn, may reduce feelings of tokenism and isolation among these individuals (often women of color) who become marginalized fairly quickly within their new departments.

In their recommendations to the Diversity Blueprints Committee, the Women of Color in the Academy Project advocate for these supportive hiring practices that impact not only women of color faculty but all faculty working on innovative, interdisciplinary work that is typically marginalized within their departments. Several of the former

faculty members interviewed for this study mentioned the supportive networks (both professionally and socially) that cluster hires create as one very effective way of retaining not only women of color faculty, but all faculty engaged in interdisciplinary work. Cluster hires have occurred within U of M departments in the past. We suggest encouraging more of these and similar hiring practices that contribute to establishing a critical mass of diverse faculty members and diverse scholarship. The Provost's recent announcement of new faculty lines specifically centered on interdisciplinary scholarship may provide an opportunity to support the recruitment and retention of women of color faculty at the University.

III. Chair Training

The University's overall commitment to diversity and inclusion needs to be systematically integrated into training for each chair or division head so that it becomes an established value system within each department.

A key component of this training must include expanding the notion of diversity to exemplify much more than visible difference or variations in phenotype. In order for women of color faculty to experience full inclusion within their departments, diversity must include respect for and acknowledgement of differences in style and self-presentation. This means that the "traditional" ways of operating, which are usually code for either behaving within the stereotypical expectations of one's gender and race and/or imitating white male behavioral styles, should not be the norms under which faculty are assessed, evaluated and promoted.

Respecting diversity must also include valuing the diversity in thought, methodology and scholarship produced by women of color faculty. Across all 28 interviews, each woman of color identified knowing her research is valued and respected by her chair and colleagues as one of the most significant factors in determining her overall satisfaction with her department. The clarification of diversity's meaning and implementation within the actual operating culture of each department requires each chair to embody these values and effectively communicate her or his expectations to the entire department. Attending to the complexity of diversity in this way will also shift the perception of many of their colleagues that women of color benefit departments primarily by adding visible diversity on committees and service-oriented departmental initiatives.

Michelle, a faculty member in the social science, captures the importance of this recommendation in her statement below:

> I wouldn't still be here if it wasn't for my chair. I don't know if people realize how much a good chair can turn a bad department around. Or, should I say an inhospitable department around. A supportive chair who really understands the importance of diversity as more than just having black and brown bodies around—who understands the importance of supporting diverse scholarship and alternative methodologies for approaching scholarship—can really impact how the faculty as a whole responds to work that is not part of what is seen as mainstream work in the social sciences. The chair has to have integrity, be committed to the ideals of diversity and really want to see junior women of color do well.

IV. Joint Appointments

Upon hire, the chairs of each department where the faculty member holds an appointment must meet with the new hire to establish reasonable departmental service obligations that will not impede the junior faculty member's research and publishing goals. In addition, there must be clear tenure guidelines that establish coherence across departments.

Many women of color attest to the positive aspects of holding joint appointments such as: getting feedback on their work from a wide range of colleagues, being engaged in lively discussions, establishing generative collaborations, and having the freedom to develop new courses. However, taking advantage of these assets becomes impossible when the administrative requirements from each department become overwhelming. The answer, as one woman of color suggested, is not to turn all joint appointments into single appointments but to make the work required from each department manageable. In this way, women of color will have the time to actually produce the innovative research that brought them to the University in the first place and contribute to the intellectual vibrancy of Michigan's interdisciplinary academic culture. When women of color faculty are hired as joint appointees, the chairs of each department must work together to concretely define the expectations and terms of their appointments in ways that allow them to have time to focus on research and teaching. On an annual basis, the joint appointees and the department chairs should meet to assess how the terms of the joint appointment are working and to make any necessary adjustments.

Brenda, a current faculty member with a joint appointment, expresses the strain and negative impact that joint appointments can create:

> It gets very demanding and the negative things that come along with it are not recognized. A lot of the labor that goes on gets lost, and it can push people out. If I leave this university, I am going to a place where I have one appointment. I think the joint appointment is one of the biggest weights in my life here.

V. <u>Tenure Transparency</u>

Each department must generate a comprehensive manual for tenure track junior faculty to supplement training on the topic of tenure attainment and departmental and university expectations as part of ongoing, structured junior faculty group mentoring. Chairs must also be trained in how to effectively communicate the tenure process to faculty and broadly distribute information regarding critical issues that affect tenure.

Time and time again, women of color report that the expectations within their department are vague, inconsistent, and shrouded in secrecy. Often key requirements are not written down or verbally communicated in a formal way, but discovered through the faculty grapevine or randomly stumbled upon. This haphazard way of disseminating and gathering information about the tenure process only insures women of color's failure in settings where their marginal status makes receiving the necessary information even more difficult than for their non-minority junior faculty peers. Angela, a faculty member in the social sciences, makes a strong statement about the unacceptability of the secrecy and mystery surrounding the tenure process and what this means for outcomes associated with women of color faculty:

> Nobody should be surprised when tenure comes up. If you don't get tenure, that should not be a surprise to you, but for so many women of color it is, unfortunately.

VI. <u>Formal Acknowledgement and Rewards for Faculty Mentoring of Students</u>

Women of color faculty have a disproportionate share of the advising workload in departments. An official system for course reduction should be implemented for those faculty members who demonstrate a commitment to carrying out the informal teaching, advising and mentoring of students who are not formally assigned to them as advisees but who seek them out. Departments could also create additional opportunities to support the research of women of color so that they are not penalized for their advising and other service responsibilities. Tamara, a faculty member in one of the professional schools, discusses the difficulty of mediating the significant time commitment mentoring students requires with the tremendous importance of mentoring, while lamenting the fact that women of color faculty bear an overwhelming amount of this responsibility:

> …Of course, it also takes up a lot of time when you could be writing. And, it's not one student, it's every black student who wants to come talk to you about something. It can be time intensive. Having more black people would mean we could spread it out…nobody cares at all. You don't get credit for that.

VIII. Hostile Classrooms: Chair Training and Official Statement Regarding Inclusion and Respect

Women of color are particularly vulnerable to experiencing both physical and verbal threats to their authority in the classroom from students who do not perceive them to be legitimate scholars or educators. The factors that contribute to hostile classroom environments for women of color faculty include: inability to assert control and authority without being labeled angry or their behavior deemed inappropriate; student expectations that they will be overly nurturing and act as mother figures; students' inexperience with women of color in positions of authority; and the inverse power relationship demonstrated through student evaluations and complaints.

Chairs should be trained to be attuned to the specific concerns of women of color in the classroom and develop concrete and effective ways for supporting women of color when they are confronted with a hostile classroom environment. In addition, departments must consider the sensitive nature of many of the subjects that women of color in particular teach around issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality when assigning course requirements for students and when creating mandates for faculty to grow courses from seminars to large lecture classes.

We recommend also that each year the President send a message to all students expressing the University's commitment to creating an environment of inclusion and respect and calling upon students to honor these expectations. We understand that this message must be carefully worded and its intentions made clear so that it does not imply the infringement of free speech and critical debate so essential to a vibrant academic community.

Rita, a faculty member with a joint appointment, highlights the unique challenges women of color must contend with in the classroom environment:

> A huge concern is the challenges that women of color face in the classroom. And it is not so much the challenges to their authority that we experience from male students both black and white, but it is the way that they are handled institutionally that needs to improve.

IX. Supporting Family and Work Life Balance

The University should publicize existing policies and implement others that are intended to improve the quality of life for faculty and their families on campus.

Women of color across the board express the difficulties of balancing family life and the work necessary to achieve tenure. If the University of Michigan is seriously interested in retaining women of color faculty, flexible work-life policies are essential to achieving this goal. Although gender roles and expectations are evolving within the contexts of the home and the academy, women still carry a disproportionate amount of the responsibility for maintaining their households and raising children. The University should insure that all department chairs and unit directors support and inform junior faculty about tenure-clock extension policies that allow faculty members time (typically a year) that will not be attributed to their tenure probationary period. In addition, new procedures need to be developed to better enable tenure-track faculty to work part-time for a limited period and pro-rate time toward tenure.

Other policies that are critical for the retention of women of color (and all) faculty juggling the demands of home and work, including sick time and modified duties policies for childbirth and dependent care, should be well integrated into each department and supported by department chairs and colleagues. It is essential that department chairs are able to communicate these policies do not represent special treatment or lowered

expectations for the faculty members who need to utilize them. The adoption of these policies has been a huge step in the direction of family and work life balance; however, they will not work if faculty members feel they will be penalized or stigmatized when they use them. Mary, a faculty member in one of the professional schools, presents the struggle of balancing work and family below:

> It is tough to balance everything with scheduling time for child and working. And I don't see it getting better for women after they get tenure. Now that illusion is gone. I think it gets harder. Most women get their degrees in their twenties and thirties when they want to start a family. I don't know how they are doing it and managing it, a baby or a serious relationship.

X.   Social Networking: Facilitating Social Support for Single Women of Color Faculty

An important aspect of overall satisfaction for women of color at the University of Michigan that often gets overlooked or downplayed is the issue of their social and emotional lives. Almost all women of color interviewed stated that having venues where they could meet other junior faculty and develop a more expansive social network outside of their departments would greatly improve their ability to create balance in their work schedules; create a greater sense of being connected to and an integral part of both the university and surrounding community; and greatly decrease their desire to seek appointments elsewhere. This is especially true for single women of color.

Based on the very concrete suggestions which emerged from many candid conversations around this topic with women of color faculty, women of color faculty recommend that the university host a regular social event for single faculty members to meet and interact with one another in an informal, relaxed environment. It is important that these events happen regularly and are designed in a way that is sensitive to issues such as cultural differences and sexual orientation. Aside from this recommendation to institute a regularly occurring social event, women of color faculty additionally recommend that chairs are made aware of the tendency to overburden single female faculty with administrative work and other non-research or teaching-related assignments under the assumption that they have more disposable

free time than married faculty or faculty with children. Angela, a faculty member in the social sciences, explains the importance of supporting single women of color's social networking capabilities within the university setting:

> It takes time to nurture children, but it also takes time to meet people to start a family. I don't think there is the same consideration if you are single. But, if you don't have a family, you need time to go out and develop your network—probably more time than someone who already has a family.

XI. Counteroffers: Acknowledging the Value of Women of Color Faculty

Department chairs and division heads can not wait until an offer from another university has been made to demonstrate respect and value for women of color's research, collegiality, departmental service, mentoring and teaching contributions. Chairs and administrators must strategically implement both formal and informal ways to recognize the achievements of women of color faculty while they are here and actively work to make counteroffers that reflect their value when they are thinking of leaving. This is a commitment that must be made by department chairs and deans.

Women of color who have left the U of M, as well as women of color at the U of M who have friends and colleagues who have gone on to other institutions, say that in most cases they could have been convinced to stay if there was some effort made to articulate their value to the department. Although an increased salary and additional research money are generally the types of considerations that are overtly on the table during counteroffer negotiations, women of color state that one critical bargaining chip is missing from these conversations: a sincere acknowledgement of their contribution as scholars, teachers and colleagues. Chandra, a former jointly appointed faculty member, explains how the reaction of the chairs in both of her departments represents this lack of commitment to retaining women of color faculty:

> I could have been convinced to stay had one of my chairs just simply asked me to stay—if one of them just expressed that they valued my work.

CONCLUSION

The implications of this research extend well beyond the concerns of women of color and far beyond the particular context of the University of Michigan, especially in light of the current political climate. As anti-affirmative action campaigns spread across the nation, it is becoming increasingly clear that not only is there a profound misunderstanding among the population at large of the value of diversity but also no clear understanding of what diversity really means in the first place. Instead of creating spaces for informed dialogue and education around the question of diversity, anti-affirmative action proponents play on the fear of difference by promoting policies, laws, and political campaigns whose primary purpose is to uphold systems of inequality. Unlike higher educational institutions in California prior to the passage of Proposal 209, the President and other upper-level administrators of the University of Michigan have supported fighting anti-affirmative action efforts and the racism, sexism and class-based xenophobia they represent. This expressed institutional commitment to equality puts the University of Michigan in a uniquely influential position within the current discourse on diversity and difference.

Based on the University's determined stance in the fight against anti-affirmative action efforts during both Grutter's unsuccessful petition against the University's law school and the case won by Gratz and her supporters, other educational institutions, the corporate community, and everyday individual citizens are anticipating the action the University will take to protect the ideals of academic excellence and diversity in light of the outcome of these political battles. Concrete actions that demonstrate the University of Michigan's refusal to succumb to status quo politics will provide valuable clues for how we, as a society, can take decisive steps to promote social, economic and political equality. This will also help us refine how we utilize the terms generally used to define equality, such as "multiculturalism, " "equal opportunity," and "diversity." The experiences and perspectives of women of color faculty at the University of Michigan provide clear direction in this regard.

The position of minorities and the underrepresented in society has been equated to that of canaries in the mines. Scholars such as Lani Guinier and Noliwe M. Rooks[13] have

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[13] See Rooks, "Like Canaries in the Mines: Black Women's Studies at the Millennium" in *Signs* vol. 25 No. 4 Feminisms at a Millennium, Summer 2000, pp. 1209-1211.

used the metaphor of the canaries that sniff out the first signs of methane gas in the coal mines and, therefore, warn and save the lives of the coal miners to highlight the critical importance of paying attention to the experiences of marginal groups as they both reflect the current state and predict the future status of the overall health of our social institutions. Thus, the narratives of the women of color in this study are more than individual, idiosyncratic stories; within the analysis of these collective experiences are recommendations for transforming the structures that perpetuate inequality and oppression on the University of Michigan campus, as well as throughout our increasingly global society, for all constituents irrespective of race or gender.

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